10 Sept. 1966

Mr. Richard Holbrooke
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Dick,

There's something I like about your new address. Simple, but dignified. It does look good on stationery (I like the blue, too).

Still, frustrating as life here can be, I can't imagine myself back there again--even where you're sitting--trying to work the problem from that end.

Which is not to say that the Washington agencies, and the President, couldn't, in practical terms, run the war from there--Washington isn't really much further removed from the front than Saigon is, and the agencies really do have great unused power (which, an insider will recognize, doesn't quite go without saying)--but to say that the information available to Washington looks just as inadequate from this end, outgoing, as it did when I used to see it incoming. Ambassador Porter made the remark the other day, commenting on the same quality you mentioned of detachedness (from reality) in the cable-writers in Washington: "Even Dick Holbrooke ((he could apparently recognize your touch on the key)) already sounds out of touch with what's happening ((baby)) here." For once, I restrained myself: from saying, "Of course, he's had to rely on Embassy reporting for a month now."

As you may have guessed, I hope, my lateness in replying was due for several weeks to total immersion in RAMJET (Roles and Missions Jacobson Evaluation Team, an acronym discovered by the team poet, Bill Stubbs). I sent off to you the other day a couple of copies of Part II, which I wrote, which is meant to serve as a background and introduction to the specific recommendations. ~~Also~~ The reaction here has been quite favorable, with less résistance to individual recommendations than we expected; when all comments are in, we'll discuss them with Porter and the Mission will decide what to do about it all. I suggest your office request many copies and official Mission comments: lest it all be buried like the Klein report. (It's already gone further than that, of course. Incidentally, I reread the TS background part of the Klein report, and I think it was a crime to bottle it up; I wish there were some way to spring it, and to force the Mission to comment on it officially, even now).

(Brief interruption just now: the MACV Colonel in J33 who commented on your Report was just in, on other business. He said, in answer to my question: "Very fine report; said many things that have needed saying for a long time. Of course, we didn't agree with everything..." On Westy's adamant attitude about keeping the Division in the RD chain of command, he just said: "Gen. Westmoreland just doesn't seem to understand that particular problem; he doesn't seem to see the difference between the military and the civilian chain of command; in general, he knows very well that RD is largely non-military, but he seems to think that to get the Division Commander to support RD he's got to command it." I'm reassured to find that Westy's obtuseness on this point doesn't reach all the way down into the staff.)

Rather than commenting now on the Report, I hope I'll have a chance to discussit in person, along with other matters. I just wrote Komer reminding him of an old, casual, offer to have me come in for consultation at a suitable time, and this seems like a suitable time. (I moved over from RAMJET to work with Thang on the elections, which are scheduled--I'm already an old enough Vietnamese hand to use appropriately cautious phrasing--for tomorrow). I'm very anxious to get back to see my kids, after a year; and I am curious as to the changes in mood, if any, I'd find in Washington. I would hope to stop in Los Angeles, to seem my children, both before (if possible) and after a visit to Washington.

Did you get my suggestion, through Wisner, that Scotton serve as a "consultant" to your staff, along with others who still have the smell of Saigon in their nostrils? I think, in a word, you ought to have a cabal of soothsayers who can read the inscrutable omens in cables and reports from Saigon and divine what may really be going on (and who can read queries and studies originating in Washington and make expressive grunts, headeshakings, and retching sounds authoritatively). Soon, I take it, you'll have Ev Bumgardner back there, as well as Vlad Lehovich and Dave Engel. Give my regards to all. Have you discovered my favorite Chinese restaurants yet: the Peking on 13th St. and the Nanking on New York and 9th? Get me back there and I'll take you all to one, or somewhere even more costly. Is there a Vietnamese restaurant in Washington yet? Do you need any nuoc mam?

Yours,